



JOSEPH R. BIDEN, III
ATTORNEY GENERAL

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
820 NORTH FRENCH STREET
WILMINGTON, DELAWARE 19801

CONTACT JASON MILLER
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER
PHONE (302) 577-8949
CELL (302) 893-8939
Jason.Miller@state.de.us

Media Release

Thursday, March 15, 2007

Attorney General Biden Announces Creation of Child Predator Unit

Department of Justice to spearhead innovative statewide program to proactively identify, pursue, prosecute, and punish child sexual predators

Wilmington, DE – Today Attorney General Joseph R. Biden, III announced the creation of a Child Predator Unit (CPU) within the Delaware Department of Justice. The first of its kind in Delaware, the Child Predator Unit will employ dedicated investigative and prosecutorial resources to identify, pursue, prosecute and punish criminals who seek to prey on Delaware's children. With specially trained and dedicated staff, the Child Predator Unit will work collaboratively with the Delaware State Police and other agencies in a proactive effort to identify and track down predators and pedophiles before they can harm our children.

In order to effectively identify, pursue, prosecute and punish these criminals, the Child Predator Unit will focus on:

- (1) Establish ongoing internet sting operations to proactively identify, target and capture predators before they reach Delaware's children.
- (2) Find and prosecute traditional manufacturers, distributors, and possessors of child pornography.
- (3) Work with state and local law enforcement agencies to more effectively track down convicted child predators who have failed to register by state law. The Department of Justice has committed two investigators to aid in this effort.
- (4) Be an educational resource for children, parents and teachers by providing information about child predator tactics, advice on ways to avoid victimization, and instructions on methods to report unlawful activity to the authorities.

"It used to be that locking our doors and watching our children in the park was enough to protect them, but nowadays predators can enter your home with the click of a computer mouse," Attorney General Biden said. "One out of seven children will be sexually solicited on the internet, and of those solicitations, one in 25 are aggressively contacted." Biden added that "it is estimated that each week over 20,000 pornographic pictures of children are posted online and that close to 100,000 illegal child pornography sites are in operation."



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“Let me be clear. Possessors of child pornography are predators. It is estimated that between 40 and 76 percent of these offenders have also committed sexual offenses against children. We will aggressively pursue these criminals and prosecute them to the fullest extent of the law,” Biden said.

Biden announced that Mrs. Melanie Withers, an 18-year Department of Justice veteran, will serve as the first Deputy Attorney General assigned to the Child Predator Unit. Mrs. Withers has extensive experience in prosecuting felony child sexual assault cases and her career reflects a dedicated commitment to protecting children. Mrs. Withers’ previous assignments included service as the first head of the felony trial unit in Sussex County. She also has handled all major domestic violence cases there for the past 13 years.

“The key to the Child Predator Unit’s effectiveness,” Biden noted, “is its involvement in the entire process, the staff that will dedicate their full-time attention to this effort, and the collaborative and proactive partnerships we’ll establish to protect our children. The mission of the Child Predator Unit exemplifies my vision for an office that is innovative and proactive in identifying child predators without sacrificing the traditional methods of aggressively investigating and prosecuting traditional crimes against children.”

Finally, General Biden thanked all Joint Finance Committee members for their commitment to the creation of the Child Predator Unit and acknowledged co-chairs Senator Nancy Cook and Representative Richard Cathcart for their leadership. He also thanked Governor Ruth Ann Minner and the Office of Management and Budget for their support in funding the positions.

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Child Predator Statistics:

Approximately 1 in 7 children, ages 10-17, have been solicited online¹

Over 20,000 images of child pornography are posted on the internet every week²

It is estimated that there are more than 100,000 illegal sites offering child pornography for sale³

Approximately 50,000 child predators are online at any time searching for potential victims⁴

Between 40⁵ and 76⁶ percent of individuals who possess child pornography have also committed sexual offenses against children

¹ National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, *Online Victimization of Youth: Five Years Later* (2006)

² National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (October 8, 2003), reported at www.protectkids.com/dangers/stats.htm

³ Internet Filter Review

⁴ Federal Bureau of Investigation

⁵ National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

⁶ Testimony of Andres Hernandez to the US House of Representatives, September 2006